



HOW TO...

Encode smaller MP3s

When you're listening to music on the move, you'll want as many songs on your MP3 player as possible. Xavier Cortez shows you how to make smaller music files so you can free up some room for more tunes

Windows Media Player 10 can rip CDs to MP3 format, but its default bit rates, which determine how big the resulting files are, are unnecessarily high. By default, you can create MP3s at 128, 192, 256 and 320Kbit/s. However, most people will find that 128Kbit/s MP3s sound just as good as CD audio. And it's often useful to encode at lower bit rates so you can fit more music on a portable player.

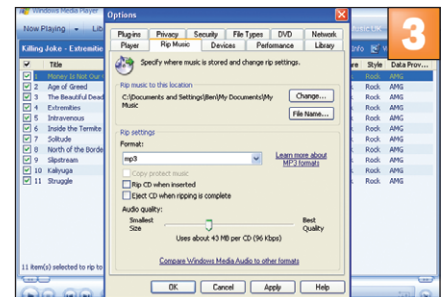
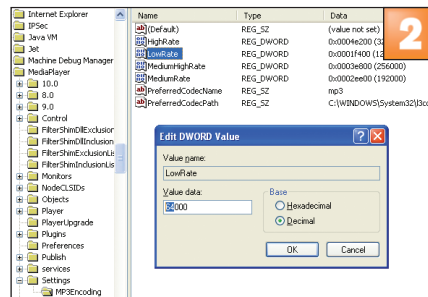
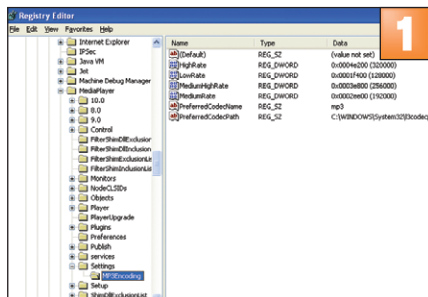
1 You can change the bit rates available in Media Player's MP3 encoder by editing the Registry. Select Run from the Start Menu, type Regedit and press Enter. The Registry Editor will then launch, listing keys on the left and

values on the right. Expand the following icon folders in the left pane using the + buttons: HKey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft, MediaPlayer, Settings. In this final folder will be another one called Mp3Encoding. You can click on this to reveal the MP3 encoding settings on the right.

2 The encoder offers a choice of four bit rates called LowRate, MediumRate, MediumHighRate and HighRate. Double-click on LowRate to open the Edit dialog box, click the Decimal button to show the setting as a numeric value, type in a more useful lower bit rate and click OK. Do the same for each of the four settings. We would recommend going for 64,000,

96,000, 128,000 and 160,000. When you've finished, close the Registry Editor by clicking the top-right button.

3 Launch Windows Media Player and insert a CD you want to rip to MP3. Connect to the internet, and the software will enter the album and song names automatically. Click the Menu button, which is fourth from the right at the top of the screen, and select Tools, Options and the Rip Music tab. Select mp3 from the drop-down list and pick the bit rate you want using the slider. Click OK, then the Rip Music button in the main interface to rip the CD to MP3.



HINTS & TIPS INTERNET

HOW TO... Find the perfect word

Every journalist knows that using interesting or unusual words is a great way to feign intelligence. But eloquence isn't just for poseurs – normal people can try it too, and it's recommended for poets and songwriters. At Thesaurus.com (<http://thesaurus.reference.com>) you'll find hundreds of words to replace overused ones such as 'nice' or 'hello'. It's much quicker to use than a paper thesaurus. The dictionary at the same site can help you check that the word you've chosen means what you think it does.

Another great site for budding poets is www.rhymezone.com. Where else can you find 258 rhymes for 'splat'? Switch on the 'Include phrases' option, and you'll be offered a range of common and downright bizarre expressions that rhyme with your chosen word. Were it not for this site, you would probably never realise that you could rhyme 'scent' with 'breach of trust with fraudulent intent'.



HINTS & TIPS OUTLOOK EXPRESS

HOW TO... Handle suspicious emails

Email inboxes are popular targets for virus writers. Being wary of attachments is no longer enough, as viewing the body of an email can be enough to infect your PC. Anti-virus software is essential to combat this problem, but there are other precautions you can take as well. Outlook Express presents emails with a Preview Pane to show the contents of the currently selected email. However, this means you can't select a suspicious email to delete it without opening it. Therefore, we recommend turning off the Preview Pane. Do this by clicking View, Layout and unticking the 'Show preview pane' box. Then you can open genuine emails by double-clicking on them, and delete dodgy emails by selecting them and pressing the Delete key. For emails you're not sure about, right-click them and select Properties. Click the Details tab and then Message Source to view the email contents without running any malicious code it might contain.

